

FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: March 13, 2014

Agenda Item: Future Fisheries Improvement Projects, Winter 2014 funding cycle

Division: Fisheries **Action Needed:** Final Action

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 10 minutes

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Background

The Future Fisheries Improvement Program continues to provide funds for projects that restore fishery habitats in streams, rivers and lakes for the benefit of wild fisheries. Applications are reviewed twice each year by a 14-member citizen panel appointed by the Governor. Citizen Panel recommendations are forwarded to the Fish and Wildlife Commission every six months for consideration and approval. For the Winter 2014 funding cycle, the Citizen Panel recommends funding 9 of 10 submitted proposals at a Program cost of \$375,709.00. Matching funds or in-kind contributions from outside sources total \$1,024,764.00

Public Involvement Process & Results

The public is informed about Program funding opportunities via news releases, a public meeting and information posted on FWP's website. The Citizen Panel conducted a public meeting to review applications, discuss proposed projects with applicants in attendance and receive public comment. No public comment was received at the meeting, except from applicants in attendance. All applications were posted on FWP's website, which allows viewers to submit comments on-line. No on-line comments were received. Environmental Assessments (EA's) have been prepared for five of the nine projects recommended for funding. The four exceptions either fell under a categorical exclusion (defined under ARM), the federal National Environmental Policy Act, or ongoing regional processes. The comment period for the EA's ended on February 3, 2014. One person submitted a comment supporting all five projects associated with the EA's. The State Historical Preservation Office commented that a cultural survey should be conducted on the Browns Gulch project. The USFS submitted comments on the Stony Creek EA, stating that the USFS should be added to the list of entities that may have overlapping jurisdiction because the USFS owns the property at the project site, and the project will be subject to analysis under NEPA, including compliance with ESA and National Historic Preservation Act.

Alternatives and Analysis

(A) The Commission could approve funding recommendations submitted by the Citizen Panel and as prioritized by the ranking committee. This would provide funds to assist in the completion of projects that will improve habitat for wild fish populations. (B) The Commission could disapprove or modify the recommendations of the Citizen Panel. Under this alternative, applicants would need to seek other sources of funding or suspend projects that otherwise would have benefited wild fish populations.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

FWP recommends that the Commission approve the funding recommendations as submitted by the Citizen Panel (Alternative A). Completion of these projects would benefit wild fish populations. FWP will ensure that a cultural survey is undertaken before initiation of the Browns Gulch project. The draft Stony Creek EA will be edited to incorporate USFS comments.

Proposed Motion

I move to approve the Future Fisheries Citizen Panel funding recommendations for the Winter 2014 funding cycle of the Future Fisheries Improvement Program.